

1 **MR. VERNON BERGSTROM**

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3 CHAIRMAN JAMES: Vernon Bergstrom.

4 MR. BERGSTROM: Thank you. I have also submitted a
5 written report on gambling in Minnesota which documents this
6 particular summary that I am now presenting. I'm Vernon
7 Bergstrom, director of Minnesotans against Gambling. We are a
8 grass roots bi-partisan non-sectarian statewide group of citizens
9 who have eagerly joined the mushrooming national backlash against
10 gambling.

11 I'm a retired county prosecutor, a liberal and a
12 member of a mainline Evangelical Lutheran church in America. I
13 oppose gambling. In the past ten years many Minnesotans have
14 been pulled into gambling's snare, orchestrated by big gambling
15 in Nevada, Atlantic City, some willingly, most lured. This
16 seduction, appealing as it does to the basic social impulse of
17 humans, led us last year to wager between five and six billion
18 dollars on a host of gambling black holes.

19 Most gambling is done by women playing mindless slot
20 machines in 17 American Indian casinos in Minnesota. Our
21 citizens, witnesses to the gambling caused crimes, family break
22 ups, bankruptcies, suicides and addictions, the terrible cost of
23 which it is, will be tabulated by this Commission are fed up.
24 They rankle in the knowledge that in the eyes of Vegas they are
25 but feeder markets for a greater Vegas tourist base of a new
26 generation of gamblers.

27 Minnesota citizens see a strong parallel in the
28 gambling fight to that other successful tobacco wars. After all,
29 it's our own Attorney General Hubert Humphrey III that leads the

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1 war on big tobacco. His position saying that Internet gambling
2 is illegal in the state of Minnesota was sustained by the
3 Minnesota Supreme Court just last week. This Commission's work
4 will determine much of America's future. I want to compliment
5 you for including studies of 16 and 17-year-old addictions and
6 would plead that you also include 12 and 16-year-olds. Cost
7 studies are needed in the areas of gambling causing loss of work,
8 work accidents, highway accidents, secondhand smoke.

9 I've read where a casino employee whose spends eight
10 hours on the job but doesn't smoke, in effect has the cause of
11 smoking one package of cigarettes, though he or she never touched
12 them. Jobs are not just jobs. There's a difference. Jobs vary
13 widely in terms of contribution to society. With this backlash
14 the past few years have shown that gambling's millions are really
15 no match for organized citizens who are fed up.

16 CHAIRMAN JAMES: Thank you, Mr. Bergstrom. I'm going
17 to ask you to submit the rest in writing and we will be happy to
18 review the whole testimony.

19 MR. BERGSTROM: I have submitted it all in writing,
20 ma'am. Thank you very much.

21 CHAIRMAN JAMES: Thank you. You're very welcome.

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